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Coach/Athlete Education: Misconduct, Sexual Harassment and Legal Liability

Planning for the next academic year has already started with August athlete and coach orientation and workshop sessions high on the list of priority programming. Sexual harassment and other forms of coach and student-athlete misconduct are "must do" sessions along with issues of legal liability given the current litigation and media risk landscape. Educational programming and policy revisions must define clear behavioral expectations and what constitutes misconduct. What should the content of these sessions include?

A sexual harassment and misconduct workshop for all employees working in athletics, recreation and physical activity settings should cover the following topics:

1. The rapidly changing athletics litigation landscape
2. Lessons from recent athletics lawsuits
3. Responsibilities of the educational institution
4. Consensual relationships versus student and employee sexual harassment
5. Unique challenges of physical activity environments
6. Clear definitions (professional misconduct, retaliation, sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, bullying, hazing, cyber-bullying, relationship violence and stalking)
7. Sexual Harassment or violence procedures when informal resolution is an option
8. Sexual Harassment or violence procedures when investigative and disciplinary proceedings
9. Model policies and practices
10. Situations: Questions and Answers

A legal liability workshop agenda for all employees working in athletics, recreation and physical activity settings should include the following topics:

1. The litigious society – implications for physical activity professionals
2. Basic professional preparation (CPR, first aid, etc.)
3. Basic instructional competencies
4. Basic professional cautions – the "DO NOTS"

5. Documentation
6. Other specific areas of concern such as:

    - Physical punishment
    - Singling out and retaliation
    - Touching students/athletes
    - Safe instructional environments
    - Safe equipment responsibilities
    - Off-campus activities
    - Captain or student-leader authority limitations

7. Situations: Questions and Answers

Note: SMR conducts workshops that provide athletics departments with model goals, objectives, policies, educational materials, and training programs that cover all the workshop topics listed above.

Topics

Ethics

Personnel Issues

Risk Management

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